TOWN
&
OUNTRY
HURCH

In This Issue

his issue is devoted to the presentation preliminary report of most of the pro-ings of the Fourth National Convoca-on the Church in Town and Coun-held at Rochester, New York, Novem-4-6, 1947. Only abstracts of most ad-ses are given.

lmost 700 persons registered for the vocation, and many more were present.

he Convocation is an informal assembly ch may be attended by all those inter-l in the town and country church. It been called a gathering of the "friends he country church."

brings together ministers, ministers' s, lay leaders, officers of government nizations, editors, and many others are concerned with the churches in rural communities of the nation.

hose who attend worship together, edu-one another with respect to methods ural church work, and make plans and mmendations. The Convocation is a m or a study conference, not an execu-body.

eatured this year were dramatic pres-tions by rural players and singing by ed choirs from thirty-one rural rches.

he Convocation is sponsored by the mittee on Town and Country of the ne Missions Council of North America, Federal Council of the Churches of st in America, and the International ncil of Religious Education.

No. 39
December, 1947

Important Aspects of the Rural Life Situation in America

B. L. HUMMEL

• There is at present a great awakening of interest in rural life. It is time for the church to take stock of the rural situation, define its function in relation to existing conditions and meet its full responsibility to the nation and the world. The world-wide call for leadership rests squarely on the church.

The Paradise of America

In contrast to the situation in most other countries of the world, America is a veritable paradise. Even so, there are many disturbing trends in rural life and many ways in which we are not measuring up to our opportunities and responsibilities.

Economically, we have a disturbing trend away from all moderate-sized farms and a big increase of those under five acres and over 1000 acres. Those under five acres increased by 300,000 and those over 1,000 acres have increased by 45,000 since 1920, with the heaviest increase in both classes in the last five years.

Technical Changes

Agriculture has been mechanized and scientific methods employed until a farm population of ¼ less than in 1910-14 produced 56% more during World War II. But this production is not evenly distributed among the farmers of the nation.

The highest 10 per cent of the nation's farms are producing 50 per cent of the agricultural output while the lower half of the farms are producing but 10 per cent of the products. An ever increasing percentage of agricultural commodities in America are being produced by hired labor while an ever increasing proportion of our farmers are receiving proportionately smaller increases.

Government is playing an increasing role in agriculture, helping to conserve resources, increase efficiency and productivity, and stabilize its economy, but there is a strong and perfectly normal tendency for the larger and more efficient farmers to utilize government aid more readily and thus speed the process toward fewer and larger farms.

Social Values

Purely from the standpoint of the farm as a factory to produce cheap food for a large non-farm population, this is desirable, but it is generally agreed that farm life has a social as well as an economic contribution to make to our national existence. No nation can stand unlimited industrialization and urbanization and it is time for America to find and strike for that balance between industry and agriculture which will provide the greatest national strength and permanency and the highest type of life which can be maintained for all her citizens.

Social problems in America are more acute than are material and economic problems during this lush period of high prices and abundant production.

The long-time slowing down of our birth rate has been reversed by war conditions and we had the heaviest population increase in 1946 of any period in our history. But the population increase has not been evenly distributed. On a percentage basis for the period from 1940-1947, the heaviest increase was in our rural non-farm population (14.3 per cent), the next in the urban population (12.7 per cent) while the farm population decreased 9.6 per cent.

On a regional basis the South gained only 2.7 per cent; the North Central area 6.3 per cent; the Northeast 9.3 per cent; and the Western area nearly a fourth or 24.1 per cent. This shift in population is in direct relation to the per capita income rates for the areas cited.

While the modernization of rural life has proceeded faster in the U. S. than in any other country in the world, farm families still fall far behind city families in this respect.

Urban Ideas Spreading

Urban ideas as well as standards of living are permeating rural areas. These, along with modern transportation and communication and the commercialization of agriculture are having a disastrous effect on the old neighborhood and community groups in rural areas.

As yet, the modernized rural schools, the churches, the increasing government agencies and farm organizations, have all been unable to bring about a satisfactory adjustment in the rural social pattern. Family, as well as community, ties are growing weaker.

The first problem in rural America today is the determination of a new set of values, a balancing of the social and the economic, the local and the national weal. A policy and a program can then be developed which will bring to us a degree of strength and stability in keeping with our resources.

The Rural Church Movement

MARK RICH

• The rural church movement has a constant concern that the church as an institution be vigorous and strong. Significant as the church as an institution is, it is vulnerable to devastating influences. Witness old Russia to see a church gone corrupt with power. The church may enslave people more than it frees them. See our own countryside to discover churches ossified in the midst of change. See churches in growing communities, blind and obstinate in the face of imperative need for outreach. Churches may become cold and old, narrow and restricted, broad and directionless, dying and dead.

There are discoverable factors making for successful churches. On the other hand, the deadly virus which weakens and kills churches can be discovered and described.

Studies By Ministers

Many pastors now do not inaugurate a significant program of church action without first making a survey. Objective and scientific studies are widely advocated. They are as necessary to growth and progress in church work as scientific investigation is to advance in medicine.

Facts are the rule with which a strong rural church will be built. Guesswork must be kept to a minimum. The stake is too great for the churches to take chances on not knowing the situation in which they work. Facts to the movement are like a light which helps a man walk in the dark.

What The Church Means

The rural church movement needs to discover an adequate way of getting to the people an understanding of what a vital rural church can mean in the life of the community and the nation. The rural churches of America, by and large, would be helped immeasurably by regular doses of a spiritual vitamin complex.

They think too little of themselves in terms of potential strength. Their task is conceived on too small a scale. They have too little understanding of Christianity as a dynamic force in all areas of life. Some see what a spiritual force it can be to the individual. Fewer see that it can give color, character and power to the community.

Where There Is No Vision

Churches are sleeping when they should be awake. Rome burns and Nero fiddles. The national structure is weakening and the rural church is unaware. Rural churches must have a vision of what can be done in their own "little" environment.

Without discounting spirit, prayer, and belief, I am compelled to put in a strong plea that the country church adopt more effective techniques for work.

There should be an extensive survey program in the area of testing rural church programs and methods. Such survey efforts would augment those of a general nature now made by national agencies.

We need better-trained ministers for our rural churches. It is pointed out that too many pastors are (1) untrained and uninterested in progressive methods, (2) trained but not interested in the rural church, and (3) short-term pastorates who remain too short a time to influence a church. From available information one might estimate that at least one-half of rural Protestant ministers are giving only part-time to the pastorate. The remainder are attending school, working at secular occupations or living in semi-retirement.

Training Improved

A significant and extensive training program has been developed during the past 25 years. Many seminaries have added to the staff a specialist in rural church work. Colleges of Agriculture have sponsored short-term schools and conferences. The home mission boards have established or encouraged schools.

Has the time not come when there should be a school or schools for the training of rural ministers? Such a school should be staffed by a corps of trained teachers who give full time to observation and study of the rural church, who become thoroughly familiar with the various aspects of a minister's duties and of the function of the rural church in the world, and who are competent teachers. This school might compare to a school of medicine, or to a department of rural sociology.

If the movement is to go forward in strength the leadership must have those qualities which mark the able leaders of our time and of past times. These are men who are challenged by Christian work in the country, men who are creative in meeting the needs of country people, men who have an adequate understanding of a comprehensive program, men who understand and love rural people, men who see their tasks as having primary significance, men who are first and foremost seeking to live the Christian life in contemporary society.

Hosts and Cooperators

mong the many agencies that ributed to the success of the ester Convocation were the fol- ng:

he Federation of Churches of Rochester and Vicinity.

he Rural Department, New York State Council of Churches.

ristian Education Department, New York State Council of Churches.

he Central Presbyterian Church, Rochester.

he First Baptist Church, Roch- ester.

lem Evangelical and Reformed Church, Rochester.

he radio stations of Rochester.

he Rochester Convention Bu- reau.

olgate-Rochester Divinity School.

rantom's Book Store, Rochester.

ouncil of Church Women, Roch- ester.

xtension Service, New York State College of Agriculture, Ithaca.

obey Parish Players, Slaterville Springs, New York.

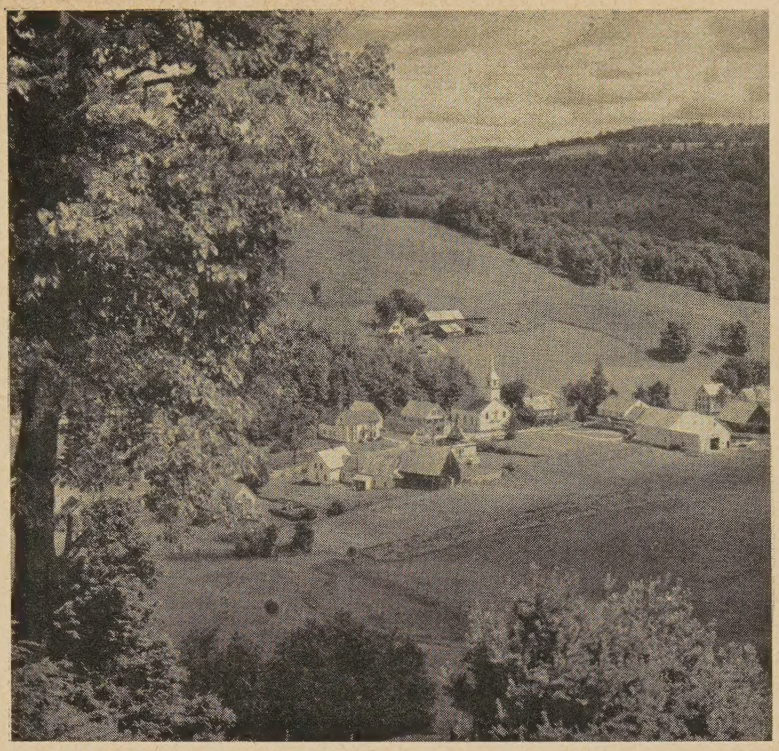
astile Community Players, Cas- tile, New York.

ural Church Choirs from thirty- one rural churches (listed sepa- rately).

ie Commission on Women's Work

he Commission on Women's rk in the Rural Church, of which . Ralph L. Williamson was irman, arranged for a luncheon ch the forty members of the mission prepared for them- es. They purchased food and ked their meal in the kitchen of First Baptist Church, Rochester, a net cost of twenty cents a piece, uding tip.

hey then decided that they had d twenty dollars over the cost of eal in a restaurant, and consid- l what to do with the money. It decided to purchase two food kages as distributed by CARE, Cooperative for American Re- ances to Europe.



Village of East Corinth, Vermont

David W. Corson, A. Devaney, Inc., N. Y.

Service of Worship in Music

• Many people commented on the way we sang. They do so at every Convocation. We made use of the new hymnal, *Hymns of the Rural Spirit,* at every session.

The congregation participated in a service of worship in music, conducted by Gustav A. Lehman, Colgate-Rochester Divinity School. Participating churches in the service of music were as follows:

ALBION AREA, Frederick Hoffmann—Director. Carlton Baptist, E. Gaines Baptist, Kent Baptist, Kendall Lutheran, Murray Baptist.

GREECE AREA, Howard Justice —Director. Greece Baptist, Hilton Baptist, Maiden Lane Methodist.

ITHACA AREA, Mrs. G. Colby Bartlett—Director. Ludlowville Methodist, McLean Federated, Mecklenburg-Enfield Parish, Montour Falls Methodist, Odessa Methodist, S. Cayuga Larger Parish, Varna Methodist, W. Groton-E. Lansing Larger Parish.

PULASKI AREA, Mrs. Richard W. Bond—Director. New Haven Congregational, Pulaski Methodist, Sandy Creek Methodist, Williamstown-Westdale Federated.

SPENCERPORT AREA, Mrs. Donald Lissow—Director. Chil Center Baptist, Rush Methodist, Spencerport Congregational.

WAYNE COUNTY AREA, Mrs. Warren Hendrick—Director. Fairport First Baptist, Palmyra Baptist, Raymond Baptist, Pittsford Baptist, Pittsford Methodist, Webster Zion Evangelical.

We Were Healthy

• The Rochester chapter of the Red Cross dutifully set up a first-aid station for the Convocation. The director of the station was forced to report that she had dispensed not one aspirin tablet or any other piece of equipment during the course of the Convocation. It is not known how many aspirin tablets were purchased by speakers on their way to the sessions, or on the road from the Convocation.

California, Here We Come!

• The Fifth National Convocation on the Church in Town and Country will be held at San Jose, California, November 9-11, 1948.

A Rural Minister Views the Rural Church's Task

ALAN B. DARLING

• A whole reorganization of the local church is needed to point up the main reason for its existence, to work in new members, and to educate for intelligent, consecrated churchmanship. Part of our past weakness has arisen from an emphasis on personal salvation without the necessary corollary of commitment to the work of the Kingdom. Further, evangelism will help solve two of the rural church's most pressing problems: leadership and money! Basically, what we need is more people!

Evangelism in High Places

That brings into the picture the problems of overchurched communities, competing denominations, and sparsely populated areas. Maybe we need some evangelism in "high places" where policies originate, as well as in struggling churches who aren't allowed to get together! Certainly the recent program of conservation of town and country churches through federation, comity arrangements, denominational and interdenominational "larger parishes" should be continued and augmented.

We have a tremendous task of Christian education. The decline in Sunday School attendance has been tragic. Rural churches have lagged far behind their city sisters because of lack of trained leadership and money for adequate equipment.

Task of Christian Education

Many a small church pastor groans over the lack of educational equipment and the ignorance of Sunday School teachers. He begins teacher training classes and those who need it most refuse to come! He asks for building improvements and teaching aids but his constituents have spent all their spare cash for a new car or a trip to California or a new herd sire, or they didn't have any in the first place!

The weakest point in our Christian education program is the American home. Few parents take the time and effort to teach their children the facts and truths of the Christian religion. We have been so impressed with the profits that effort produces in terms of dollars that effort spent in training the next generation in religion seems wasted. You can't put your finger on the results. A farmer will stay up all night with a sick cow who would never think of praying all night for a wayward son or daughter.

Up to Parents

Until the Protestant parents of America wake up to the task God has assigned them, the Church is sadly crippled. Our beliefs must be talked over and lived at home. The Bible needs to supplant the radio as the most used piece of furniture. Parents and children must take their places in the church and its work.

Church people should cooperate in fostering good recreation, obtaining improved roads, schools, hospitals, library facilities; backing soil conservation practices and improved methods of land tenure; helping start a credit union or cooperative.

Sense of Community

Or it may be that first of all the church needs to develop a sense of "community" so that groups which have never worked together before begin to see how they can improve their standard of living by tackling common problems together and sharing their social and recreational life as a unit.

Much needs to be done in educating our people to see what a difference creative recreation can make. Many parents seem unaware of the fact that the types of recreation available in a community sets the character environment for their boys and girls. Commercial recreation has little that stimulates the intelligence, little that develops social graces, a certainly little that promotes co munity fellowship.

Creative Recreation

You simply don't get to kn people better in a movie theater football stadium. The give and ta of group participation are lackin Local parties, folk games and fo dances, lawn sociables, and oth types of community recreation a more truly "recreational." T church can well take advantage the excellent social and recreation program of the 4H, the Rural Yout and other rural life agencies, wor ing with them and utilizing the trained leadership.

I am convinced that we must ha a satisfying Christian philosophy rural life. It is amazing how ma people stumble along without a coherent philosophy of life at all! I cluding some ministers! Part of o task as country ministers is to in part a pride and satisfaction to o people based on an appreciation the values that lie in the communi

Stewardship

If our rural church people pra tised the Biblical ideal of ti ing they wouldn't have run-dow churches or lack good pastors. W have not been able to inculcate thoroughly consecrated idea Christian stewardship in our peopl Our rural people are just as muc in the habit of "mining God" as th are "mining the soil" and either vi will eventually harvest a bankru civilization. If we're honest with o soil, we'll practice intelligent conse vation; if we're honest with Go we'll practice honest stewardship.

Ministers Wives School

• The Fourth Annual Rural Mi isters Wives School will be he again next spring, shortly after Eas er, at Grailville, Loveland, Ohi Information and registration can b secured through Mrs. Harold Ha mer, Rio Grande, Ohio. It is po sible also for the husbands to sha in this experience at a Catholic l women's rural school.

)wn & Country Church

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N F. PIELSTICK, Associate Secretary.

A Country Minister Views the Rural Community Situation

ROBERT L. CLINGAN

• The rural non-farm population constitutes a challenge to rural America. If our rural areas can integrate these part-time farmers and commuting residents into its common life, they will prove a tremendous asset for the rural communities and their churches.

The rural life of our forefathers was rooted in the neighborhood. Today, except for certain sections of the south, the neighborhood has lost its power, and the larger community is absorbing its former functions.

Farm and Village

At one time in the history of our nation, the village people and farm people stood apart and had their separate organizations. Today the resources of farm and village are combined as never before.

Community development in many places is only the drift of forces propelled by people who do not realize what they are doing. This movement needs to become a burning passion as it has in many rural areas. When rural people catch the vision of the larger community, they will give it creative direction and find it auspicious of a great future for rural America.

Too many capable professional people have left the rural community because of certain inadequacies. Rural America needs people of courage and determination who will continue to live in the country, help it remedy its inadequacies and find its fulfillment.

Of all the misconceptions of rural life, the worst is the belief that the minister and his wife who enter a rural pastorate isolate themselves from world affairs.

National Problems Sampled

In my own community all our national problems are sampled here. Christian influence can in time make each rural community a laboratory where men of good will may demonstrate the art of reconciliation and cooperative social reconstruction.

This is still one world. Every tension between East and West, Russia and the United States is a symptom of two systems trying to exclude each other from larger portions of a one world society. Were this not one world, we could afford to ignore each other.

Urban society and rural society are even more, component parts of one culture. Urban and rural America belong to each other.

There can be no solution to the human-relationship problems of our society without vital rural communities. We must have a rural America that will discharge its responsibilities to the emerging one culture of our essentially one world.

Vital Churches

Rural living cannot attain its greatest possibilities without vital churches, socializing, evangelizing, and spiritualizing every area of rural life.

For too long we have allowed the statement to go unchallenged that the best young people go to the city and the skim milk stays on the farm. The war-time production record of the American farmer could not have been achieved by a skim milk people.

A more apt description of what is happening is the picture of the farmer sorting out his seed. The best grain was always saved for seed while the poorer kernels were sent to the city market. Where agricultural opportunities are sufficiently encouraging, the best seed has stayed on the farm, and the poorer grain people have gone to the city.

The Rural Church in the South

HARRY V. RICHARDSON

• The church in the rural South deserves far more attention than it receives, for it holds a key place in contemporary American Christianity. The rural South is not only a seed bed of population. It is the most fertile seed bed of American Protestantism. The South is steadily pouring into the body of the nation a stream of migrants, white and black who for the most part have been trained in the Protestant way.

Migrants To Cities

These migrants maintain the population of our declining cities, and they also maintain the membership of our sterile big city churches. It is to our shame that we permit so many of them as they move from the South to our Eastern and Western cities to be lost to active church membership or, worse, to become members of the erratic sects that crowd the big city bottoms.

The Southern rural church has both great virtues and great problems. One of its virtues is that in the good rural pastor we see the Protestant ministry at its best. We see a pastor working with a "knowable" group of people in intimate companionship, providing Christian guidance and leadership as together they move along the devious lanes of life.

Minister's Opportunity

Such a minister does more to make religion relevant in our present world than the big church pastor to whom his members are mostly names on cards in an indexed file. A minister working intimately with his people is also Protestantism's surest offset to the increasing competition of other faiths. We are learning by bitter experience that Protestant pulpit eloquence is a poor answer to the studied, time-tested, devoted social service of the priest and nun.

A further virtue is that in the Southern rural church we see a high measure of lay participation. For instance, under our present system of absentee or "sometime" preachers, the whole task of religious education devolves upon the laity. This means that the propagation and perpetuation of the Christian religion is largely a lay service.

Respect and Loyalty

Not the least of the virtues of the Southern rural church is the fact that it enjoys a respect and loyalty from the community that churches in other sections do not have.

But this church of many virtues has many problems, too, problems that are economic, religious and social.

The economic problems of the church follow from the economic status of the people. Often the people are poor. It is no secret that Southern farm income is far below the national average, that lands are eroded and wasted, or that tenancy is high throughout the region, often in its most vicious forms. This poverty of the people leads to poverty of the church.

Poverty of Churches

Studies repeatedly show that where there isn't much money, there isn't much church. In business ethics where you get what you pay for, this may be all right. In Christian ethics under the ideal of self-sacrificial service, this is all wrong. Clearly the church has a stake in the welfare of the people, for as their level of living rises, the level of church life does too. Church welfare is thus closely tied to the whole matter of land ownership and land use.

The religious problems of the Southern rural church stem mostly from the absentee, untrained ministry. Most rural pastors live outside their parishes, and only visit them at intervals to hold services generally once or twice a month.

Absentee Pastors

This means that the rural Christian receives a diminished share of pastoral guidance in facing his life problems. It is little wonder that in many ways the rural Christian a his church are both weak. As lo as we send to rural charges men w have no comprehension of ru social forces and who have had training in rehabilitating depress groups, just so long will the ru church miss its major opportun for service to a needy people.

All too often the men who ser in rural sections are the weaker on in theological preparation. This largely responsible for the po quality of preaching that obtains many rural pulpits. It results in a tiquated interpretations of the G pel that have little relation to actu life. The rural South is one of t final strongholds of the old-tim camp meeting or religious revi with all their concomitant evils.

Inadequate Education

The social problems that beset t people also affect the church. For e ample, the inadequate public ed cation of the rural South is one fa tor responsible for the conservati and backward attitude toward effor at social improvement. Whenever demagogue wants to air his ego h heads for the country as a mu heads for the stable at feeding tim He knows he will always find a hea ing in the hills. This reactionary a titude is a strong deterrent to ma a young man who might wish t serve in a rural church.

The chief problem of the rur church in the South is of course t race problem. This is the prince evils. It is this problem that h split the church wide open into tw distant segments, so that it is dif cult for white and colored Christia to see themselves as children of t same God, followers of the sam Christ, seekers for the same Heave

Church and Race Problem

It is good to be able to repor however, that the church is makin significant progress in its strugg with the problem. With increasin courage the Southern church is cal ing for tolerance and fairness. O several occasions ministerial associa tions have taken stands against op pression and demagoguery. Grou

lay Christians are calling for a ›re faithful application of Chris- n principles in race relations. Last umn the white and colored state ptist conventions met together a day in Georgia.

As to the Negro rural church in South, if we take any problem of white church and multiply it by , we then will have a good com- n denominator for comprehend- current conditions. To an in- sified degree the Negro church fers from the absentee and un- ined pastor, a poverty stricken mbership, and a type of church that has little relation to and le effect upon daily life.

aining Negro Ministers

A significant attempt to meet the oblems of the Negro church is w being sponsored jointly by the me Missions Council and the elps-Stokes Fund. Twelve rural urch departments have been set in strategic seminaries, with a al enrollment last year of 176. At esent twenty highly trained young ople are at work in seven South- n states seeking to improve the effi- ncy of the rural ministry, and rking to make the rural church a re effective instrument of com- unity improvement.

The rural church seems destined rtly to take on a new significance American life and in American igion. As our big cities and indus- es are decentralized, the people ll move out into rural villages. ne unnoticed rural church now zing in the woods may shortly aken to find itself ministering to enlarged and an enlightened embership. Once again it may me to hold the central place it ce had in the life and thought of is nation.

Grange Message on Rural Life Sunday

Joseph W. Fichter, Oxford, Ohio, haplain of the National Grange, epared "A Message for Rural Life nday," which was widely broad- st. Mr. Fichter, a layman, is also aster of the Ohio State Grange.

Photograph by Wilma Wilcox

The Church and Rural Rehabilitation in Asia

• Protestant churches were urged to develop an interdenominational program of rural rehabilitation in Asia as an integral part of their foreign missions projects by Mr. John H. Reisner, director of Agricultural Missions, Inc., New York City.

Mr. Reisner addressed the closing session of the fourth annual National Convocation on the Church in Town and Country. The Convocation is sponsored by the Federal Council of Churches and the Home Missions Council of North America, with headquarters in New York City, and the International Council of Religious Education, Chicago.

"Asiatic countries are still suffering from their prewar problems of over-population in relation to land resources, lack of sanitation, housing, inadequate diet resulting in malnutrition and disease," Mr. Reisner explained, adding that "these people must be taught efficient agricultural techniques, the use of good fertilizers, seed and farm equipment."

Mutual Aid

"If rural rehabilitation is to be effective at all, it must deal with rural people where they live—in their homes, on their farms, in their communities," said Mr. Reisner. "These people need help, not exhortation, the kind of help that will enable them to help themselves," he added.

"We can no longer approach the problem on a piecemeal basis." He continued, "a united, cooperative endeavor is the only way the job can be done at all adequately.

"Ignorance, illiteracy, ill-health, poor methods of agriculture, absence of trade and industrial skills, lack of opportunity for productive use of time, inadequate recreation and other social, economic, and spiritual disabilities are some of the problems which must be faced if an effective program is to be provided for these people."

The Country Church and Public Affairs

BROOKS HAYS

• There are moral as well as economic reasons for the American farmer's interest in the great public problems of our day, particularly the problem of providing some of the food required by stricken populations of the old world.

Rural church leaders have a profound contribution to make to our evolving foreign policy. Unless moral leadership is commensurate, America's new-found political and military power might deprive us of the world's esteem and our influence would be lessened.

If the moral ingredients for peace are not available, military strength will be inadequate for the world's reconstruction. By this I mean we must seek the world's good as we seek our own security.

If we help Europe secure minimum food requirements we will have to accept some inconveniences and sacrifices. There is no hope of stabilizing conditions if widespread hunger and distress exists this winter. Furthermore, our hearts must be in the enterprise.

One primary reason for helping is to serve an enlightened self-interest, but there are other reasons which must be interpreted in spiritual terms. Our Christian duty is involved. This is basic with millions of rural people who want to participate in a great service and do it to conserve human values not measurable in terms of government strategy. Still the governmental procedures must be utilized for our church resources in a material sense are hopelessly inadequate.

The church can perhaps become a mediator in some of the raging conflicts of modern political and economic life. The rural church has a part to play in interpreting the economic goals of the farmers and at the same time to urge upon the farmer a response to Europe's appeal for food.

The Churchman must stand for justice for the American producers but the voice that pleads for justice may also urge repentance for all of the American people.

Our superior position before the world must not lead us to a quest for power for power's sake or to seek domination of the world where we have heretofore sought its good will.

A great prerequisite to a sound foreign policy is a willingness by political leaders to place Christian principles ahead of partisan or personal advantage. Loyalty to these principles by every public man is compatible with the two-party system.

If our foreign policy is to be a truly American policy—an effective one for mankind's greatest crisis—it must draw upon the resources of both the Republican and Democratic parties. It must be bi-partisan in that sense.

If the Christian church cannot get us to see that fact, no other force in American life can induce us to see it.

Friendship Train

• The Friendship Food Train, originated by Drew Pearson, the Washington columnist, was sent on its way by a national committee, headed by Harry Warner, the motion picture producer. The train started at Hollywood in Hollywood fashion, and picked up contributed food all along the way. All railroad facilities were provided by the Association of American Railroads.

The train was endorsed by the Citizens Food Committee, Charles Luckman, Chairman, although it is a separate project from the Luckman Committee's project to save 100,000,000 bushels of grain. The cargo of the Food Train is an outright gift to people in need abroad.

The train started out expecting to pick up eighty cars loaded with food. Estimates indicated that the quotas assigned were being doubled. The train was started with cash contributions of about $10,000.

A Parable of Two Villages

• There were once two villages, Trak and Plak by name. And both were prosperous and filled with happy, healthy people. But it came to pass that a hurricane destroyed the village of Plak, killing and maiming some of its inhabitants, while the neighboring village of Trak was left untouched.

And the Trakians were filled with compassion. Their fire department and impromptu rescue crews rushed to the stricken village to offer help. And many lives were saved thereby.

But as the days wore on the Trakians returned to their homes and to their jobs and talked together of the rescue work they had done. Thus the Plakians were soon forgotten and left to their own means.

But the situation was serious in the village of Plak. Many of the breadwinners had been maimed and could not make a living for their families. Even the simplest of tools had been lost and the rebuilding of homes and buildings proceeded at a snail's pace. So hard had become the struggle for life that many Plakians lost interest in the future, and began to murmur that there was no God.

Now it chanced that a merchant in Trak, passing through the village of Plak on his way to a far city, saw how bad things had become, and returned at once to his home town. And a meeting of the whole community was called. As he spoke there was weeping and audible expressions of sympathy. And at the end of the meeting a resolution was passed unanimously to organize the Society for Aid to Plak.

Pledges were made and projects of help drawn up. For a long time the people of Trak spoke of the help they were going to give their neighbors. But aside from a few hand tools and enough money to buy window glass for the city hall, no help came, and through the years the village of Plak became a slum, widely renowned as the birthplace of criminals and the seedbed of civil discontent.

P. W. K.

(Brethren Service News)

An Appeal to Farmers and Country Churches

An appeal emphasizing the que contribution that the Ameri- farmer can make to the success the food conservation program issued in Rochester in a joint ement by Dr. Samuel McCrea vert, general secretary of the Fed- l Council of Churches, and Dr. rk A. Dawber, executive secretary the Home Missions Council of rth America.

'Grain used directly for human nsumption will keep more people ve than grain used to fatten live- ck for slaughter," said the state- nt which was presented by Dr. wber at a session of the National nvocation on the Church in wn and Country.

'We recognize that conservation asures involve economic sacrifices the farmer," the announcement ntinued, but "they are justified, t as good business practice, but as moral response to human need. ie world food crisis is a challenge Christian service."

ie Full Statement

The complete text of the state- nt follows:

'The American farmer has a cen- l role in the national food con- vation program designed to help et the relief crisis overseas. The nerican people as a whole can lp to reduce unnecessary con- mption of food by the careful anning of menus and elimination waste. American industry can lp by halting or curtailing all non- ential use of grain during the nergency. Under the voluntary ogram, the American farmer is nfronted with a significant oppor- nity for Christian service.

"Grain used directly for human nsumption will keep more people ve than grain used to fatten live- ck for slaughter. Therefore, re- ction in the use of grain for ani- al feeding can help to make avail- le essential cereals to feed starving en, women, and children abroad.

"We recognize that conservation measures involve economic sacrifices for the farmer. These measures are justified, not as good business practice, but as a moral response to human need. The world food crisis is a challenge to Christian service.

"In addition to conserving grain whenever possible, farmers who hold cereals can help the hungry overseas directly by contributions of grain through church relief channels. Specific information may be secured from the Christian Rural Overseas Program, 308 Washington Street, Chicago 6, Illinois.

"We urge the pastors and members of the churches of Christ in rural America to consider together ways and means to meet their Christian obligations. We urge church people everywhere to support the food-saving program and set an example within the community. God has granted us a new opportunity for Christian action. May we all in this present test be worthy of the high calling wherewith we are called."

The Cooperative Relief Program

• The overall American church program of relief to war-disrupted lives and reconstruction of war-ravaged churches and communities last year amounted to about $30,000,000, in terms of dollars. Between a third and a half of this the churches channeled through Church World Service. For 1947 the cooperative goal is $12,000,000—plus 12,000,000 pounds of gifts-in-kind. Already the goods shipped exceed this figure. The financial goal may be outdistanced, too, if the interdenominational appeal this Thanksgiving on behalf of the CWS work is a success. This appeal offers Americans the opportunity to share, in spirit and kind, some of the abundance celebrated on that holiday.

A Prayer for Those Who Would Learn

ALMIGHTY GOD, who hast set thy children over all thy wondrous works, help us to play our part in the unfinished world which we share with thee. We have mastered the seas, the earth, the air, and still we knock at the door of mystery. Teach us delight in the conquest of our own fear, and prejudice, and ignorance even as we rejoice in dominion over the things of time and space.

O thou great goodness at the heart of life, who givest us our day in the long march of centuries, invest us with a sense of duty to bring a new order out of this present time. Save us from belief that we have made this the best of all possible worlds.

Preserve us from feeling that we have already performed thy perfect will toward all men, lest we who possess and enjoy the fruits of thy goodness shall think that we are dividing them fairly with our brethren. O thou whose work in our world is the building of the souls of thy children, move us mightily with a sense of the sacredness of human life, that always in thought, word, and deed we may heartily join thee in the upraising of thy Kingdom and its brotherhood because they shall have known thy fatherhood.

Through all the rebuilding of our way of life, as counsels vary and tongues clash, help us to grant as much to the motives of our fellows as we would claim for our own. Let the spirit be always greater than the letter of the law. Then shall we ever be renewing the letter and shall be moving onward to thy truth.

Bless, preserve, and enlarge forever the vision of all thy children throughout the world who shall study to purify their lives and to serve thy holy will. Amen.

—Waitstill Hastings Sharp

(Used by permission of Department of Religious Education, American Unitarian Association.)

Young Citizens Attend Vacation Bible Schools

• Two Vacation Bible Schools were conducted by Mrs. Dawson in Rankin and Langdell Communities, in Arkansas, during July and two weeks in August. Fifty girls and boys enrolled in the two weeks.

The third Vacation Bible School opened for two weeks beginning August 18 at Gould. One hundred twenty-five pupils enrolled in this school. The teachers were Mrs. A. White, Mrs. A. McDowell, and Mrs. Ethel B. Dawson, Field Worker for the Home Missions Council of North America.

Courses were taught illustrating Christianity functioning in daily life situations. Emphasis was placed on the application of the Christian faith to every phase of life: in the community, in the home, in vocations, in functions of citizenship, in the intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and spiritual development.

Mrs. Pinkie Rush of Gould, Mrs. White, Mrs. McDowell and other Christian leaders worked diligently with church groups and other community leaders to arouse interest in the needs of the young people.

Those who worked in the interest of the Vacation Bible School wish to express appreciation to the churches for participating in an interdenominational school. The progressive churches realize that the school is a part of the church program in promoting Christian education. It will improve and increase the Church's influence in the community. Daily Vacation Bible Schools are very constructive in character development of youth as Christian citizens.

—*The Negro Spokesman,*
Pine Bluff, Ark.

Purposes of This Journal

The purposes of this Journal are:

A. To encourage cooperation among rural churches.

B. To improve the administration of the local church, this to include organization of the church, finance, religious education, community relationships, and the training of lay leadership.

C. To stimulate the development of a Christian philosophy of rural life, this to embrace ethical issues in agriculture, social reconstruction, and government programs; and the content of the minister's message.

Part of Larger Program

The Journal is an important part of an enlarged "cooperative rural church program" that will encourage a national "rural church movement."

Sussex County Summer Vacation Church Schools

• Sussex County, New Jersey, had an enrollment of 1,080 children in its fifteen vacation church schools this summer, which were under the direction of Myrtle A. McDaniel, Executive Secretary of the Sussex County Cooperative Parish, Newton, N. J. The schools were of two weeks' duration and were attended by children from 39 churches, representing all denominations.

Coaching classes and a Laboratory School for church school leaders and helpers were held throughout the spring months. The earnest interest that was shown in these preparatory classes resulted in a faithful staff of 183 volunteers who taught and directed the program.

A recent study indicates that the enrollment of these church schools represents one-third of the total enrollment of all the Sunday schools of Sussex County, which seems to us a record-breaking achievement. If any other county can beat this report, we would appreciate having an account of it.

Rural Church Activities in the Philippines

• Rev. Allen R. Huber, Director of the Rural Church Department, Philippine Federation of Evangelical Churches, Manila, writes as follows:

"All who are interested in cooperatives will be glad to hear that a number of our credit cooperatives survived the war. Now great plans are being made. The National Cooperative Administration has agreed to publish five thousand copies of our new credit union book which we are calling 'Credit Union Hand book.'

"A Cooperative Institute to which all the government and church cooperative organizers are being invited was recently held in the Manila area. We used our new book in this institute and then sent the provincial organizers back to their provinces to start twenty study clubs in each province.

"If this plan succeeds we shall be in position to follow up with the actual organization of five hundred credit unions within the next year. Lack of adequate credit facilities is one of the causes for the pitiful plight of many of our rural people here."

Concerning the Commission Reports

ORION ULREY

In recent years much progress as been made towards accomplish- ig the objectives of the rural church towards building an understruc- ure which in the future should tend o improve the religious and spirit- al life of rural people.

The job of achieving the objec- ves of the rural church is becoming ore difficult, made so by the im- act of the scientific-technological volution which has been under ay during the past two centuries. t least the technological revolution laying bare some of the weaknesses f our culture, of our habits, our ttitudes, our programs. We need ot reiterate the many new issues rought about by this urban, indus- ial, interdependent, material-em- hasis on life. They are, however, no ore difficult than the problems of esterday—disease, ill health, high nfant mortality, ignorance, etc.

The scientific revolution is *a- oral.* Its effects are only *immoral* if an and his organizations are im- oral.

Farmers have sufficient funds o adequately finance their rural hurches. On Jan. 1, 1947 they wned 22 billion of current assets currency, deposits, U. S. bonds) and 9 billion of fixed assets (land, im- rovements and equipment). They ad a 113% equity in their total arm business. They can rebuild or ehabilitate their churches. They an pay their minister and religious vorkers satisfactory wages. I believe hey would—if they had an adequate nderstanding of the rural church, ts troubles and its potentialities.

We are in common agreement hat we need an expansion of rural hurch work, both from within and mong the church organizations, by eaders of agricultural agencies and arm organizations.

To be specific, we need a coordi- nated national program by the de- ominations and inter-church agen- ies represented at this conference. We need a staff, at the national level, ufficient to carry out many of the resolutions we have been futilely passing in recent years.

We need the finance adequate to provide a staff of rural church specialists, of social scientists and of public relations experts—to motivate and mobilize the unused and friendly forces of the country—so that we may make progress on other programs, on other forces that are not going our way, morally and spiritually.

(Reports of the Commission were still in preliminary form when we went to press.)

Rural Religious Drama

• An evening of rural religious drama was a feature of the Rochester Convocation.

The play, "The Angelus," was presented by the Tobey Parish Players, Slaterville Springs, New York, Mrs. Agnes Giles, Director. The actors were Mervin Walker, Mrs. Bertha Metz, Carl Barnes, and John Powell.

The play, "Peace Be to This House," was presented by the Castile Community Players, Castile, N. Y., Mrs. Louise Saryna, Director. The actors included John Martin, Mrs. John Martin, and Dean Richards.

Trial By Fire

• Before the subsequent chaos of the war ends every economic instrumentality, social institution and political system which does not serve a useful purpose will die. Those which are not killed by forces inherent in necessity will commit suicide by neglect of vital function. Any system which has no service to render during this emergency cannot survive the crisis. History does not give a second chance to irrelevancy.

The agrarian economy in America is in great jeopardy. The people, the land and the productive power are abiding elements but the economic and political policies concerned with agriculture are variables which still must prove their practicability and justice. The survival of the latter factors depends upon their relevancy to present requirements.

The farm problem demands disinterested intelligence and patriotism which seek, not only the good of the nation but the service of all humanity. If the instruments of agrarian action in America should fail—whether through the impact of selfish blocs, partisan policies, administrative inefficiency or other causes—the whole rural economy could fail, giving civilization a shock from which it might not soon recover.

—THOMAS ALFRED TRIPP

U.S.D.A. Photograph

The Country Church and the Country School

EVELYN R. HODGDON

• The country church and the country school as old and accepted institutions in country life have tremendous responsibilities for the leadership of people in their areas.

The social pattern and population constituency of these areas are rapidly changing. The rural nonfarm population is growing; decentralization of population and industry is beginning; the geographic area of the rural community is increasing; the rural area more and more supplies the urban population; farming is becoming a business and as such is increasingly specialized; the farmer as an employer of labor finds himself directly affected by labor problems; he is also affected by his new world citizenship whether he accepts it or not.

The implications of these changes are legion. The rural institutions are charged with the education of a large group of non-farm as well as farm people. Their programs must meet the needs and interests of both groups. The moving of social centers from neighborhoods to one larger center seems to increase the number unserved by both church and school programs.

Boys and girls in rural communities must be educated for adjustment to urban as well as rural life and for world as well as local community citizenship. These changes and their problems come faster than generations of youth are educated, hence adult education is essential.

The school is concerned with helping the individual to realize his greatest possible worth in satisfactions to himself and society. The Church is concerned with the salvation of individuals and is therefore concerned with the salvation of society.

These institutions have common needs for trained professional leadership who are: 1) aware of the values of living in the rural community; 2) alert to the current problems of the people; 3) sensitive to the dynamics of human relationships; and 4) convinced that Christian brotherhood actually practiced in one's own community is the first step toward world brotherhood.

The real brotherhood of man will depend upon the ability of rural groups to build communities in which every individual has a feeling of security in belonging and in which there is equity of opportunity.

C.R.O.P. Reporting

• Every day there is evidence of increasing response to the Christian Rural Overseas Program (CROP) of the American churches, through which farmers can send part of their produce overseas under the sponsorship of Church World Service and the Lutheran World Relief.

Already more than 30,000 bushels of wheat have been contributed and at least 100,000 more bushels have been pledged throughout the wheat belt, in drives stimulated and led by church groups, according to John D. Metzler, church relief leader, who is director of the program.

CROP's purpose is to encourage and handle the shipping of contributions from rural areas in the United States, in an effort to alleviate hunger and hasten rehabilitation in war-torn countries.

State and County Groups

With headquarters in Chicago (308 West Washington St.), CROP covers most of agricultural America. State and county church groups work in coordination with the Chicago office in making "it possible for American farm folks, the world's best neighbors, to contribute in kind from their bountiful harvests to the relief of their overseas neighbors," Mr. Metzler explained.

The grain is collected at elevators, the elevator operators working in cooperation with the farmers and the relief project. From the elevators, the wheat is either shipped abroad in bulk, or is sent to mills to be made into relief cereal before shipment overseas.

Collection Handled

CROP handles all the collection of goods contributed by the farmers for overseas relief, and is responsible for its shipment to warehouses located near ports along the coast. From there the supplies are shipped overseas and distributed under the auspices of Church World Service, interdenominational relief and reconstruction organization, and the Lutheran World Relief.

As with other relief materials and goods shipped abroad by Church World Service and the Lutheran World Relief, the contributions are distributed according to need, regardless of race, creed or political affiliation.

"Wheat, from the midwest, has been the chief source of CROP contributions so far, but the program includes plans for the cooperation of farmers throughout the United States. Corn and other grains, nuts, dried fruits, wool, raw cotton and soy beans are particularly needed for shipment abroad," Mr. Metzler said, "although other staple commodities may be included as well."

The program of CROP differs from other relief programs, the director said, in that "whenever possible, whole grains and unprocessed materials will be shipped. This will provide activity for the recipients and will better enable them to help themselves. In addition, the people overseas will find wider use for the grains and materials if they process them in their own way."

The Little Shepherd of Big Lick, by Carol Hughes, in the November issue of *Coronet* magazine is the story of how Kentuckian Eugene Smathers and his bride, missionaries from the Board of National Missions, Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., brought religion and prosperity to a community in Tennessee.

A Farmer to His Rector

J. Clifford Young, a dairyman in ew York, who lives on lands that ave been in one family and a dairy rm for a century, is quoted in *TEELWAYS,* the periodical of the merican Iron and Steel Institute, follows:

"I told the rector in Greene the ther day it would be nice if he'd ave the *Benedicite* sung oftener ven if it's hard to sing. A lot of ie congregation are dairy farmers nd like the words:

" 'O all ye Beasts and Cattle, bless e the Lord; praise him, and magnify im forever.' "

Nelson A. Crawford is the author f the article.

June 27, 1947

Ir. Benson Y. Landis
ommittee on Town and Country
97 Fourth Avenue
lew York 10, N. Y.

)EAR MR. LANDIS:

The War Department gratefully cknowledges the generous permis- ion granted in your letter for free ranslation and use in Germany of he following publications: *What Emphasis for the Church in Town nd Country* and *The Church's Part Vith Rural Youth.*

Sincerely yours,

(Signed)
G. L. EBERLE,
Brigadier General, USA
Acting Chief, Civil Affairs Division

Hymns of the Rural Spirit

• This 128-page hymnal, long anticipated, is now available. It has been prepared by the Committee on Town and Country, in cooperation with the Commission on Worship of the Federal Council of Churches.

The special committee for this publication was Mark Rich, Chairman; Clifford L. Samuelson, Ralph L. Williamson, and Benson Y. Landis and Don F. Pielstick ex-officio. Harold V. Milligan is the music editor and Deane Edwards, general editor.

The purpose has been to gather in one volume hymns old and new expressive of the rural spirit. It is not intended that this book shall take the place of the ordinary church hymnal, but rather supplement it, thus making available a greater variety of hymns suitable for use in rural situations.

The book contains 110 hymns, 13 rural folk songs, 13 pages of worship material; and is suitable for use not only in rural churches, but in camps, conferences and other gatherings.

Paper-covered copies are selling at 35c each postpaid, and 25c each in quantity plus transportation. *The stiff cloth cover edition is 60c each postpaid for single copies, and 50c each in quantity plus transportation.*

Orders should be sent to the Commission on Worship, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10. Both cloth and paper bindings are being shipped.

Book Review

Our Rural Communities. By Laverne Burchfield. Public Administration Service, Chicago, Ill. 1947. $2.50.

The purpose of this book is, first, to present a brief picture of the major problems that challenge our rural communities today, and, second, to provide a guide to the sources of information respecting them. Its aim is to open up and make more readily usable the extensive materials upon which a program of community action may be based.

This purpose the book accomplishes. Each chapter deals with a particular facet of rural life (schools, health, housing, youth, welfare, and so on), sets forth the basic facts, underscores the major problems, and provides in discussion form a summary of the pertinent literature. Comprehensive bibliographies, which follow each chapter, include references to approximately 750 books, pamphlets, and articles, the majority of them published since 1940.

Our Rural Communities is a source of information for all concerned with rural problems and their solution. It will be especially useful to leaders and groups interested in improving the facilities, resources, and opportunities of their communities.

This Road We Walk

• "This Road We Walk," the first interdenominational documentary film depicting the relief and reconstruction work of the American Churches in Europe and Asia, has been produced by Church World Service for showings in theaters and churches throughout this country.

The sound motion picture will be used widely as part of the program to stimulate greater giving among American church people, according to an announcement from Church World Service, interdenominational overseas agency.

The film was made with the cooperation of church leaders and professional cameramen in Asia and Europe. Actual shots were taken of people receiving clothing and food sent from America. Some of the footage shows how U.S. church aid has helped rehabilitate Christian institutions—schools, churches, missions and hospitals—in war-disrupted countries.

Other scenes depict Americans making contributions at this end of the "Road," and trace gifts in their route by sea, rail and road to the places where they are needed.

The sound, technical and production work on the film was done by Julien Bryan, director of International Film Foundation. "This Road We Walk," 20 minutes in length, has been made in both 35 mm prints for theaters and 16 mm prints for showings in churches, schools and other halls.

Prints are available from any of the Church World Service regional warehouse centers or from most denominational headquarters. Further information about the film may be obtained from Church World Service headquarters, 214 East 21st St., New York 10, N. Y.

An Order of Service at the Convocation

CONDUCTED BY FRED D. WENTZEL

THOUGHT FOR MEDITATION

The harp at nature's advent strung has never ceased to play:
The song the stars of morning sang has never died away.
And prayer is made, and praise is given by all things near and far:
The ocean looketh up to heaven and mirrors every star:
The green earth sends her incense up from many a mountain shrine:
From folded leaf and dewy cup she pours her sacred wine.
The blue sky is the temple's arch, its transept, earth and air;
The music of its starry march, the chorus of a prayer.
So nature keeps the reverent frame with which her years began;
And all her signs and voices shame the prayerless heart of man.

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

HYMN: "This Is My Father's World"

CANTICLE OF THE SUN (to be read in unison)

O most high, almighty, good Lord God, to thee belong praise, glory, honor, and all blessing.

Praised be my Lord God with all his creatures and especially our brother the sun, who brings us the day and who brings us the light; fair is he and shines with a very great splendor: O Lord, he signifies to us Thee.

Praised be my Lord for our sister the moon, and for the stars, the which he hath set clear and lovely in the heavens.

Praised be my Lord for our brother the wind, and for the air and cloud, calms and all weather by the which thou upholdest life in all creatures.

Praised by my Lord for our sister water, who is very serviceable unto us and humble and precious and clean.

Praised be my Lord for our brother fire, through which thou givest us light in the darkness; and he is bright and pleasant and very mighty and strong.

Praised be my Lord for our mother the earth, the which doth sustain us and keep us, and bringeth forth divers fruits and flowers of many colors, and grass.

Praised be my Lord for all those who pardon one another for his love's sake, and who endure weakness and tribulation; blessed are they who peaceably shall endure, for thou, O most Highest, shalt give them a crown.

Praise ye and bless the Lord and give thanks unto him and serve him with great humility.

—FRANCIS OF ASSISI

MEDITATION: "A Confession of Faith" FRED D. WENTZEL

I believe in God as *the Father of our world.* I accept literally the words of the hymn, "This is my Father's world." I rest me in the thought of rocks and trees, of skies and seas—his hands the wonders wrought." Because he created the earth, as he created man, the proper relationship between them is one of kinship. I cannot, therefore, ignore the world, as if it did not exist. I cannot coldly use it, as if it were a thing without life.

I cannot treat it lightly, as if it were of no importance to my spirit. I cannot fear it, as if it were intent on doing me harm. I cannot set out to conquer it as if it were my enemy. I am persuaded by my religious convictions to trust the earth, to approach her with reverence, to walk with her as brother walks with brother.

Modern Man's Error

The insanity and the lostness of our contemporary civilization, its essentially bestial character, its colossal cruelties, are all, I think, to be partially explained by the fact that we have betrayed our kinship with the earth. "Consider the lilies, how they grow," says Jesus, but modern men hear these words with contempt, thinking that they are merely the outpouring of an ancient sentimentalist.

"Praised be my Lord with all his creatures and especially our brother the sun, who brings us the day and brings us the light," writes Francis of Assisi, but the proud discoverers of atomic energy regard him as an insignificant mystic who knows nothing of reality. I cannot escape the urging of God that our redemption will not come until we learn to sing with Francis the Canticle of the Sun, and give ourselves to a reverent communion with brother fire and sister water and our mother, the earth.

Earth Is Sentient

It is Jesus and the Saint of Assisi, and modern seers like Charles E. Jefferson and Liberty H. Bailey who have nurtured my faith in God as the Father of our world, but I have also discovered for myself that the earth is sentient and vocal, responding to our moods and speaking to our needs. I know a constant inspiration in this marvelous earth, this year-round pageantry of creation, this Great Dipper in the sky pouring starry wonder upon the world.

I stand in awe before the blossoming bush and the wind-tossed wheat field and the hills rejoicing on every side. And when sorrow smites me, when death overwhelms me, I lean not only upon the Father and upon my brethren, but also upon the peace of stars and trees and running waters and singing birds. I know that Sidney Lanier tells the truth when he says:

Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent;
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to him,
The little gray leaves were kind to him,
The thorn-tree had a mind to him,
When into the woods he came.

d Is Guide

I believe in God the Father *Almighty*. He guides the sun in its rising and in its setting. He keeps the stars upon their courses. He writes his laws in the heart of man and in the whole history of his family. He moves forward, with amazing patience and with infinite power, toward the realization of the holy communion of mankind.

He is mighty enough to create a universal commonwealth of free spirits bound in harmony with one another by their common devotion to his fatherly purpose. Because we are free, and foolish, we will not be brothers, preferring to be beasts; we will not be sons of the Father, thinking it smarter to be sons of the devil. But God is not defeated nor dismayed.

Today he looks out upon the world which he has made—the sky, the sea, the land and the multitudes of men. I think there is in his eyes no bright laughter, but a gray sorrow and a dark pain. So very long, and with such unbelievable hope he has yearned over the creatures of his hand, and now again he knows a father's disappointment and a father's pity for his children.

d Shares With Us

He has taken us up on the wings of the wind, and from the clouds we scatter a brutal, all-consuming fire. He has shared with us the secrets of his lightning, and with ugly cunning we hurl its bolts through water and air to cover sea and earth with desolation. He has given us language and music and art so that we might understand and enjoy and admire one another, and we turn every divine gift to hurting and maiming and killing one another.

He has made the soil rich with good things so that every man and child might be content and secure, and we fill the world with the lamentations of the hungry and the feeble cries of the starving. He has sent among us a Man full of grace and truth, so that we might clearly see the ways of brotherhood and peace, and we are torn asunder by many divisions and debase ourselves again and again in the ultimate irreverence of war.

e Yearning, Hopeful Father

But this is the majesty and the power and the glory of God, that he remains, even now, the yearning, hopeful Father of mankind. He suffers the agonies of love thrice denied and a thousand times scorned, but he cannot let his children go, cannot give them up, cannot cease from believing in them, trusting them, caring for them with a strange and marvelous care. Thus all our sins are laid at last on him. He is wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. And, incredible though it may seem, he continues to believe in us, miserable sinners that we are! As our world begins to know more fully this everlasting, almighty love of the Father, it will come to itself and leave the far country and go home to pardon and to peace. Then there will be a great rejoicing, and laughter will be in the Father's eyes, and glad bells will ring, and heaven and earth will sing for joy. Lord, let this come to pass in me, and in my time!

Hymn: "Father Almighty" *Tune*: CRUSADERS' HYMN

Father almighty,
Maker of earth and sky,
Thy love is like the impartial sun:
Thou lightest every mind,
Thou warmest all mankind,
From East to West thy mercies run.

Lord of our universe,
Ruling all lands diverse,
Thy truth is like heaven's generous stars,
Shining with saving light
In all climes high and bright,
Beyond man's sundering walls and bars.

Brotherhood's Architect,
Greater than race or sect,
Thy roof lends shelter to every son;
Give our blind eyes to see
Mankind's true liberty
In love that makes all kindreds one. Amen.

Federal Census of Religious Bodies

• The National Convocation on the Church in Town and Country, a gathering of 700 representatives of rural Protestantism, convened at Rochester, N. Y., Nov. 5, 1947, earnestly requests the Congress of the United States to make adequate appropriation to the Bureau of the Census for a Census of Religious Bodies.

The decennial Census of Religious Bodies has proved in the past an invaluable aid to a host of religious leaders in the fields of research and administration. There is no other agency capable of conducting such a census as thoroughly and as scientifically as the Bureau of the Census. The abandonment of the 1946 Census of Religious Bodies by the Bureau of the Census for lack of funds to complete it leaves the nation with no adequate statistical data on religious bodies.

It is for these reasons that we petition the Congress to reinstate the Census of Religious Bodies with adequate appropriation at the earliest possible date.

—*A Resolution Adopted by the Rochester Convocation*

In The Magazines

• The many things that we in America have to be humbly and happily thankful for appear in the *Country Gentleman,* Philadelphia, Pa., November 1947, under the title, "Thanksgiving," by Roma Cain Carter.

Advance, Boston, Mass., October 1947, contains several articles of interest. They include "Faith in the Wilderness," by Hugo R. Pruter; and a thorough statement on Rural Congregationalism by T. A. Tripp. The November *Advance* also has an article by Dr. Tripp on the rural Congregationalists.

Word and Way, Kansas City, Mo., September 25, 1947, publishes "Rural Churches Urged to Join Parade of Progress," excerpts from an article written by Ferdie Deering for the *Baptist Messenger.*

Our Church in Town and Country, Dayton, Ohio, October 1947, features "Basic Values in Rural America," by B. H. Cain.

Soil Conservation, Washington, D. C., October 1947, tells us that "Jesuit Fathers are Skilled Stewards of the Soil." The author, Guy R. Jones, is district conservationist, Soil Conservation Service, Opelousas, La.

"New Tillers of the Soil," as told to Elizabeth Herring, is reprinted from the May 1947 *Woman's Press,* New York, N. Y.

The Rural Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn., October 1947, announces: "the 'Rural Lutheran' Becomes a Monthly."

The Rural Messenger, New York, N. Y., August 1947, reports on the Findings of the twenty-fifth National Episcopal Conference on the Town and Country Church under the title, "Rural Church Advance Through Strong Diocesan Action Urged."

Leo Lania writes about "Father Tompkins of Cape Breton" in *Nation,* New York, August 30, 1947. Dr. Tompkins has been a pioneer in adult education through economic cooperation.

"The Need of the Rural Church," by E. W. Mueller, is published in *The Expositor,* Cleveland, Ohio, October 1947.

"The Methodist Rural Conference" is reported by Elizabeth Watson, in the *World Outlook,* New York, N. Y., November 1947.

What the Every Member Canvass for raising the church budget can accomplish is told under the title, "The EMC Saves a Rural Church," by William W. Switzer, *The Presbyterian,* Philadelphia, Pa., October 25, 1947.

Steelways, New York, N. Y., November 1947, features the story of Henry von Stiegel in an article by Jules Billard, entitled "A Rose, A Stove and a House of Glass." It tells about the church in Manheim, Pa., which pays a rental of one red rose a year.

Community Service News, Yellow Springs, Ohio, September-October 1947, includes "Education for Survival," by Griscom Morgan, and "Bricks Rural Life School," by Ruth A. Morton.

Christianity and Crisis, New York, N. Y., October 27, 1947, publishes an article by Richard L. Snyder, entitled "The Responsibility of the Rural Churches," which is a criticism of the commitment of advance as adopted by the committee on Town and Country.

"Rural Social Action," by Roger Ortmayer, is published in *Social Questions,* New York, N. Y., October 1947.

The Christian Evangelist, St. Louis, Mo., October 8, 1947 contains an article, "A Rural Pastor," by George J. Peters.

The Town and Country Pastor, Indianapolis, Ind., Fall 1947, features an editorial "On Getting Rural Resources Dedicated to the Church."

The Ohio Council of Churches, Columbus, Ohio, says that "Love of Country Church and Fear of Losing it Cause Record Farm Bureau Discussions" in the *Ohio Christian News,* September 1947.

Rural Life Conference

• The Sixth Annual Rural Life Conference of the Historic Peace Churches (Brethren, Friends, Mennonites) is being held at the Walnut Street Church of the Brethren in North Manchester, Indiana, December 4-6, 1947. Questions being considered include:

Do farmers, industrial workers and consumers have common concerns? What causes so much misunderstanding among these groups? What caused our high prices? What about cooperatives in our economy?

What is the outlook for the historic peace churches? What can we do together to improve the situation? How may we strengthen and improve our church colleges?

The Enlarged Town & Country Church

• We have doubled the size of TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH.

The Committee on Town and Country decided to take this step as a venture of faith. Receipts from subscriptions have thus far been sufficient to provide an eight-page but not a sixteen-page journal. The hope is that there will be many interested cooperators who will say so many good words about TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH that we will have enough subscribers, even at the present subscription rate, to carry the venture.

What You Can Do

There is no central promotion fund for TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH. It can only be promoted by the interested boards and agencies and by the ministers themselves. Will you, therefore, take responsibilty for:

1. Asking for circulars and sample copies;
2. Announcing the Journal at ministerial association meetings;
3. Seeing that TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH is announced at all rural church conferences;
4. Sending us material for publication.